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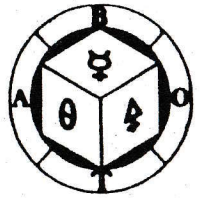
TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 8



BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Eight

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

The title of this Key means literally "the chief feminine elder". It applies perfectly to Hecate and the other moon goddesses of the ancients, including the Egyptian Isis and the Hindu Maya or Prakriti. Under the figures of these goddesses the priesthoods of old time concealed their knowledge of the powers of subconsciousness.

Remember that subconscious powers are universal as well as personal. In the doctrine received by us it is held that this subconscious activity is the real substance of all things we call "physical objects". What appears to us as wood or stone, as various sorts of minerals, as the bodies of plants and animals, as the matter entering into the forms round us, is held to be actually the subconscious level of the manifestation of the One Force pictured in Tarot as the Fool.

A few years ago scientists would have made fun of this idea. Today several prominent physicists say boldly that the real substance out of which atoms are built is "probably" **mind-stuff.** This probability of modern scientific speculation is an established certainty for the Inner School to which we owe the Tarot Keys. **The actual substance of the physical plane, from which all forms perceptible to human senses are built, is mental energy working at the subconscious level.**

Hence the Tarot Key which pictures this primary material is rightly named "the chief feminine elder" because it symbolizes the original receptive, reproductive and form-building power in the universe. This it is to which you have access through your personal subconsciousness which is like a bay opening into the ocean of universal subconscious mental energy.

Blue is the predominant color of Key 2, and in one occult color-scale blue is attributed to the letter Gimel and to the moon. It is also associated with the element of water and with subconsciousness.

Much of the symbolism of the High Priestess is connected with memory. Her scroll contains the complete record of experience, but two things are necessary if you are to read it.

First, you must practice concentration. By careful observation and vivid awareness of what goes on round you, you focus your mental camera and the resulting images are sharp and clear. Secondly, you must understand and apply the laws of recall as set forth in the symbols of this Key.

The pillars represent two of these laws by their form and color and another by their position. You easily recall ideas or things **like** each other, ideas or things in sharp **contrast**, ideas or things **near** each other in space or time.

In practical mnemonics, or the art of recollection, these three principles are utilized. Use these mental identification tags when you file your experiences. Thus you will make a mental index which will enable you to recall whatever you wish.

Link what you want to remember with something like it. Contrast it with something markedly different. Notice what things are near it in time or space. Do this when you meet a new acquaintance and hear his name, and you will find that you have no difficulty whatever in recalling his name the next time you see him.

In the symbols on the veil behind the High Priestess, the members of the pattern are pomegranates and palms which symbolize opposite forces and refer to the law of contrast. Thus both repetition and contrast are shown by the pattern on the veil.

The many repetitions of these units of design refer to the fourth law of recall which is that of **frequency.** We recall easily what we often repeat. You had an opportunity to put this law into practice when you learned The Pattern on the Trestleboard.

Along with frequency goes recency, since we tend to recall recent experiences more readily than those which occurred some time ago. This law of recency is represented in Key 2 by the writing on the scroll.

These laws of memory have to do with various processes of **association**, dealt with in connection with the meaning of the letter Gimel in the preceding lesson. There we mentioned universal association and communication. The law which makes this possible is bound up closely with all the meanings of the number 2 and is graphically represented by the robe of the High Priestess.

This robe symbolizes the element of water, which is, in turn, a symbol of **root matter**, or **Prakriti** as Hindus call it. The wavy lines of the robe represent vibration. This is one of the most important words in occultism, but one which is sadly abused by ignorant dabblers and mystery-mongers.

We live in a vibratory universe and it is vibration in the root matter which puts us in touch with other points in the universe. These points are themselves centers of the conscious energy of the One Life-power. The same law of vibration, at work on the physical plane, brings to us the radiant energy of the sun and other forms of energy converging upon this planet from every point in space.

The root matter is identical with subconsciousness of which water is also a symbol. Water was the first mirror, and because mirroring is duplication or reflection, the symbolism of water is directly related to the meanings of the number 2. It is the conscious energy of the One Force, acting upon itself in its subconscious aspect of root matter, which brings into being all physical structures, including the cells of your body.

The function of every cell is the result of the Life-power flowing **through** that cell. This is the truth behind the statements developed in Lesson 4 of SEVEN STEPS.

Watch your daily experiences closely and you will soon be able to detect the operation of subconsciousness in your own life. As you become increasingly familiar with these principles and the way they work, you will put them more and more into conscious operation. Thus will you gain greater control over the forces of your personality. Persistent practice in directing your personal forces leads eventually to the attainment of extraordinary control over physical conditions, and this control is exerted by mental means.

The veil behind the throne of the High Priestess is a symbol of virginity. The design on it refers to the associative powers of subconsciousness. The units of the design are palm leaves and pomegranates which are, respectively, masculine and feminine symbols. The pomegranates are red, the color of the masculine planet Mars, while the palms are green, representing the feminine Venus vibration. This is only one of many places in Key 2 where the union of opposite forces is symbolized. The veil itself, because it joins the two pillars, is another representation of this union.

The pillars, alike in form, but opposite in color, symbolize all pairs of opposites, such as light and darkness, attraction and repulsion, affirmation and negation, active and passive, manifest and unmanifest. In each of these pairs, the first is represented by the white pillar and the second by the black.

On the white pillar is Yod (י), the initial letter of the Hebrew noun יָכִין, Jachin. On the black pillar is Beth (ב), the initial letter of בֹּעַז, Boaz. Thus the pillars of the High Priestess are identified with those at the porch of Solomon's temple.

The lotus buds at the top of the pillars refer to the subconscious activity which is the cause of growth and development in organic life. They are buds because this Key represents potencies or possibilities of subconsciousness, apart from their actual expression in response to impulses originating in self-consciousness.

The High Priestess sits on a cubic stone to show that the functions of subconsciousness are related to principles which are fundamental laws of space. At this point, it is beyond the scope of this lesson to enter into extended exposition of the meaning of the cube. It is a symbol of salt, a preservative, because salt actually crystallizes into cubes. The cube is also a

symbol of the element of earth and of the physical plane. Again, it stands for truth and for order because all its faces are equal, and so are its boundary lines.

This cube is of stone, a word having occult meanings which signify life, wisdom and union. Briefly, the cubic stone in Key 2 means that every operation of subconsciousness is based on immutable principles of truth and order operative throughout the physical plane as well as in the higher fields of activity.

The robe of the High Priestess, besides being a representative of the root matter, is a symbol of flowing and fluidity. Thus it typifies the ever changing forms of life. It is drawn so as to seem to flow out of the picture. Understand it as being the source of all streams and pools among the symbols of the Keys, from Key 3 on through the series.

The High Priestess' crown is of silver, the metal of the moon. It shows, by its form, the waxing and waning lunar crescents with the full moon between them. They suggest periodicity and alternation as well as the reflecting and reproductive power associated with the moon and with lunar deities in every system of mythology. Furthermore, since the moon actually polarizes sunlight, we find here another reference to the polarity symbolized by Key 2.

The cross on the woman's breast is white, to represent light. It is also the primitive form of Tav (ת), the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, corresponding to Key 21. This cross has many meanings some of which will be mentioned in subsequent lessons. Now, its four equal arms may serve to remind you of the four implements on the Magician's table and of their combined activity. Nor will you miss the connection between the cross and Hecate, patron goddess of the points where roads meet at right angles.

The scroll represents memory, the record of experience and the basis of history. The word TORA signifies law, and is a rearrangement of the letters of the word ROTA, Latin for wheel. This is a reference to the Law of Cycles, or Rotation. The Law of Cycles is closely connected with the Law of Spiral Activity represented by the rolled-up scroll. Both laws are aspects of the Law of Rhythm.

The right hand of the High Priestess is hidden because the more powerful activities of subconsciousness elude our attempts to analyze them. Her left hand, therefore, is visible, but her right hand is concealed to intimate that we perceive only the end results, or relatively superficial manifestations, of the occult forces she represents.

Finally, this Key symbolizes seven great Hermetic laws or principles. Many writers on Ageless Wisdom have discussed them. They are as follows:

1. THE LAW OF MENTALISM. The law that the totality of the universe is essentially mental. This is indicated by various details of the symbolism which suggest that

subconsciousness is the "matter" or substance of all things.

2. THE LAW OF CORRESPONDENCE. The meaning of the letter Gimel is only one of many expressions of this law to be found in the symbols and the occult attributions of Key 2.
3. THE LAW OF VIBRATION. This is represented by the basic meanings of the number 2, and by the wavy folds of the High Priestess' blue robe.
4. THE LAW OF POLARITY. The pillars and the palms and pomegranates are among its principal symbols.
5. THE LAW OF RHYTHM. This is symbolized by the crown, since the basis of rhythm is periodic action, like the waxing and waning of the moon. Notice that this is the crowning symbol intimating that rhythm is the dominant law in subconscious mental activities. Every utilization of occult powers in magic demands the establishment of some chosen rhythm.
6. THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT. This is symbolized by the scroll and by the word TORA. This law is revealed by, and, in turn, makes intelligible, the record of human experience.
7. THE LAW OF GENDER. This has many representations in the symbolism of Key 2.

Years ago, an excellent little treatise was written by "Three Initiates" giving a detailed explanation of these seven laws. Our affiliates will find it excellent supplementary reading. It is entitled THE KYBALION and is available in our catalog.

The main lesson you should now learn from Key 2 is that your personal field of subconsciousness is materially connected with even the most distant stars. "Your" subconsciousness is a temporarily restricted portion of the potential mode of universal matter. Mind-stuff is the original material from which everything is made. Through various processes, all essentially mental, the mind-stuff undergoes changes in form which make it **appear** as physical objects.

These are actual objects. What we are saying about their essential mental quality is in no way a denial of their reality as things in man's environment. But it is important to know that their original and actual material may be shaped by conscious control of human mental imagery. Through your personal subconsciousness you have access to unlimited supplies of the original material of the physical universe. When you learn how to use powers which are already yours, you may shape this material AS YOU WILL.

Whatever existeth
Is as a ripple on the surface of the stream,
But all are of the one substance.
Thus all share in the peculiar quality
Of the stream itself,
Which is the mirror of myself to myself,
The root of all remembrance.

Creation is the record of mine ever-changing manifestation.
All things bear the imprint of the history of the universe.
Nothing of mine activity escapeth this record.
In it do men share, because they, too,
Are parts of the stream of mine inferior nature.
Thus are they partakers in my perfect recollection,
Which is the source of all memories,
And the root of all the wisdom of mankind.

From THE BOOK OF TOKENS
By Dr. Paul Foster Case